



United States Department of  
Agriculture



Forest Service  
November 2019

# Decision Memo

## **Star Gold Corporation Longstreet 2018 Mineral Exploration Project**

**Plan of Operations 03-18-01  
Austin-Tonopah Ranger District,  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest**



## **BACKGROUND**

The proposed Longstreet 2018 Minerals Exploration Project (Project) is located on NFS lands approximately 35 miles northeast of the city of Tonopah, NV in the Monitor Range in central Nevada, T.6N., R.47E., MDB&M, Nye County, Nevada. This project location has received past mining and exploration activities. The Project Boundary encompasses 371 acres, with approximately 291 acres within the Georges Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area. National Forest Road 405 is excluded from the Roadless Area. No new road construction or reconstruction activities are proposed in the Project Area. The Project would utilize existing roads or cross-country travel for access to all of the drill sites.

The Plan of Operations (POO 03-18-01) proposes to conduct locatable minerals exploration drilling and collect groundwater and geotechnical data within the Longstreet Project Area (See Figures 1 & 2). Star Gold Corp (SGC) proposes 12 exploration drill sites, four geotechnical drill sites, four groundwater monitoring wells, and one groundwater production well in the Project Area. The proposed water production well and four groundwater monitoring wells would be used to determine water quantity and quality as part of hydrogeological studies required by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) for potential future mine plan analysis.

Most of the proposed drill sites, including well installations, would be entirely located within the footprint of existing surface disturbances within the Project Area and would require minimal to no additional surface disturbance. Potential surface disturbance associated with the drill sites may occur where the sites extend beyond the existing disturbance and would consist of approximately 0.74 acres of temporary disturbance for drill pads and 0.77 of acres of cross country travel.

Approximately 8 miles of existing roads would be utilized within the Project Area. Minor road maintenance is anticipated during the project. In order to minimize impacts to sage grouse, migratory birds, and bats, drilling would not occur between March 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. Although it is not anticipated, there may be up to 35 pinyon-juniper trees cut.

## **Equipment**

A Caterpillar D6, Caterpillar 320 excavator, Case 680 backhoe, or equivalent equipment, will be used to construct the drill sites. This equipment would also be used to conduct reclamation after drilling is completed. Exploration and drilling personnel will access the site in four-wheel drive vehicles. One truck-, track-, or skid-mounted drill rig will be used in the Project Area and the rig will include the following support vehicles:

- One rubber-tired two-ton water truck with 1,500-gallon water tank or an all-terrain buggy with 750-gallon saddle tank;
- One pipe truck;
- One booster truck;
- One D6, or equivalent dozer\*;
- One backhoe\*;
- Up to four pick-up trucks;
- One auxiliary air compressor; and
- One portable light plant/generator.

\*The D6 dozer and the backhoe could remain on site during drilling to assist with equipment moves and repair access roads and drill sites, if needed.

Equipment required for drilling will include one truck, track, or skid-mounted drill rig and miscellaneous service vehicles. Each drill crew will consist of one driller, two helpers, and one geologist. The drills will operate one 12-hour shift per day, seven days per week. The crews will stay in surrounding towns and commute daily to the site. During exploration activities, drilling procedures will be managed to control cuttings, prevent the discharge of drilling fluids into drainages or down slopes below drill sites, and keep work sites clean and safe. The duration of drilling at each site could vary by location and range between two days to two weeks. In the event that no personnel are on site for extended periods of time, all drill holes, including partially completed holes, will be plugged. Ground water monitoring and production wells will be secured with locking well caps as required by Nevada State regulations.

### **Reclamation**

Reclamation will be completed to the standards described in 36 CFR 228.8(g). Surface disturbance will be recontoured to approximate the original contours and would then be seeded with a USFS-approved certified weed free seed mix at the appropriate time of year and at an application rate for optimum seed sprouting and plant growth. Seeds will be dispersed using a broadcast method and then raked. Reclaimed surfaces will be left in a textured, or rough, condition to better optimize revegetation success. Final reclamation of surface disturbances will be completed within one year from the start of operations. All exploration drill holes will be plugged in accordance with the Nevada Administrative Code 534. Seeded areas will be evaluated for revegetation success

### **DECISION**

It is my decision to approve Plan of Operations (POO) 03-18-01 for SGC to perform mineral exploration activities as summarized above with mitigation requirements, equipment use, reclamation, and staging area delineated using separate categorical exclusion authorities.

My decision to authorize the exploration activity falls under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 – Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, Section 32.2, categories established by the Secretary using the rule at 36 CFR 220.6 (e) that excludes from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA); specifically Categories 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(8) **“Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing roads.”**

My decision to authorize the drilling and continued use of the monitoring wells and associated access routes over the course of the next 5 years falls under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3) **“Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.”**

This list of required mitigation measures is included in the project record, and will be incorporated into the POO (Section VI [A]-required changes/modifications/special mitigation).

### **Operational requirements/mitigation:**

- Contact the District Geologist at least 2 weeks prior to when you intend to initiate ground disturbance. The date you provide at this time will be considered the project initiation date.
- The operator will notify the District Geologist at least two weeks prior to mobilizing equipment to the site. The operator will be required to ensure that equipment be thoroughly inspected and cleaned by personnel and contractors to remove potential weed contamination prior to being brought



to the site. Equipment will be cleaned with high-pressure hoses and free of caked mud and/or plant debris prior to entering the project site to avoid the introduction of noxious weeds and spread of invasive species.

- Plug drill holes immediately before moving to the next to limit potential changes in air flow, relative humidity, temperature, and other environmental conditions to below ground habitats.
- Follow Dark Sky Lighting requirements consisting of limiting the amount of light to that which is truly necessary, shielding that directs light downward where it is most useful, and turning lights off when not needed.
- On site Tribal monitoring near documented archeological sites will be coordinated with SGC, District Archaeologist, and Tribes – specific details are included in Section VI of the Plan of Operations under Cultural Resource Protection.

**Key mitigations that will be implemented to minimize adverse effects on wildlife species of concern and their habitat in addition to protecting other resources include the following:**

- All snags that do not pose a threat to public safety or directly interfere with the proposed Project operations will be retained. Measures should be taken to avoid snag removal.
- Mature pinyon and juniper tree removal should be avoided, when possible. Prior to exploration activities, GSC will report to the District Geologist an estimate of number of pinyon and/or juniper trees would be required for removal.
- All trash and scrap materials will be removed and properly disposed of to prevent harm to wildlife, people, and equipment.
- A Forest Service approved seed mix will include plant species suitable for deer browse and sage-grouse habitat.
- Proponent is responsible to monitor for noxious weeds in the project area.
- Implement a seasonal restrictions on Project Activities from (November 1 to March 31) within 520 feet of bat hibernacula and (May 1 to August 15) and within 520 feet of bat maternity colonies.
- To minimize impacts to the Active Windy Canyon greater sage-grouse lek, Project-related traffic will avoid use of the Windy Canyon access road between 3:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. from the last week in March through the first week in May.
- If active golden eagle nests within one mile of Project activities will be assigned an appropriate spatial buffer based on topographic shielding during the courtship, incubation, and nesting period (February 1 to July 31) to minimize any indirect impacts to reproductive success

**Rationale**

Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook (dated 5/28/2014), Section 31.2 states that resource conditions should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to a proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or an EIS.

I find there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be

considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist with both current and recent planning efforts and analysis for the project area as they are identified and disclosed below

<b>Extraordinary Circumstances Resource Conditions Considered</b>	<b>Present (Y/N)</b>	<b>Degree of Effect</b>
<i>Federally listed threatened or endangered species</i>	N	None present, no impact
<i>Species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species</i>	Y	May impact individuals but is not likely to cause a trend in federal listing or loss of viability
<i>Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds</i>	N	None present, no impact
<i>Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas</i>	N	None present, no impact
<i>Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas</i>	N	None present, no impact
<i>Research natural areas</i>	N	None present, no impact
<i>American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, and</i>	N	None present, no impact
<i>Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas</i>	Y	Present, no impact with successful implementation of mitigations; Tribal Monitors may choose to be present for project related activities.

I find that this action does not involve any extraordinary circumstances as listed in 36 CFR 220.6(b):

a. *Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.* Biological surveys determined habitat potential for Townsend's western big-eared bat within the project area. Successful implementation of the seasonal restriction and other project design features will mitigate impacts to any FS sensitive species that may be determined to be present in the Project Area.

b. *Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:* I have reviewed the project file and find the activity would have no impact on this resource. No project activities are proposed in flood plains or wetlands. A Forest System Road traverses the bottom of the canyon up to the Project Area and may cross seasonal water flows, but no impacts to any associated riparian vegetation will be done. No municipal watersheds lie within or adjacent to the project.

c. *Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas.* I have reviewed the project file and find the activity would have no impact on this resource. The project area is not located in, nor would the project have any negative direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on, any congressionally designated areas.

d. *Inventoried roadless areas.* The majority of the proposed project is located within the George's Canyon IRA, including 5 of the 7 proposed monitor wells, 11 of the 12 exploration drill holes, 2 of the geotechnical drill holes and 1 of the 4 geotechnical holes. Effects to the IRA and wilderness potential values are protected by minimizing the amount of temporary construction to only that which is necessary for safe and efficient operations.

Overall the long-term impacts to the IRA from this project and from reasonably foreseeable future projects would be minimal. This project complies with all Forest Service directives and waivers regarding IRA protection. Per inventoried roadless review protocol, acknowledgement to make a NEPA-based decision and implement the Longstreet 2018 Mineral Exploration project was received from the Chief of the United States Forest Service on December 17, 2018.

e. *Research natural areas.* There are no research natural areas within the project area. I have reviewed the project file and find the activity would have no impact on this resource.

f. *American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.* No American Indian religious or cultural sites have been identified within the project area.

g. *Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.* In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the FS has assessed the effects of the proposed action on historic resources and has consulted with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In a letter received by the FS on October 10, 2019, SHPO concurred with the FS's determination that the proposed undertaking will pose no adverse effect to historic properties for this undertaking. SHPO acknowledged Forest Service consultation with the affected Native American tribes had been initiated. SHPO stated that if any buried or previously unidentified cultural resources are located during the project activities, all work in the vicinity of the find should cease and SHPO should be notified for additional consultation before work activities are permitted to resume.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A Scoping Notice of Proposed Action with was emailed/mailed on March 5, 2019 to all potentially concerned individuals and organizations, to include the Nevada State Clearinghouse. The formal comment period ended on April 4, 2019. Project information was also entered into the FS's Planning Appeals and Litigation database and subsequently published to the Schedule of Proposed Actions which is viewable by the public. Timely responses were received from the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Schroeder Law Offices representing Heath Miller and Colvin & Son LLC. I have reviewed all comments received during scoping and taken them into consideration during my decision.

## **TRIBAL INVOLVEMENT**

Tribal governments of the Yomba Shoshone Tribe and Duckwater Shoshone Tribe were contacted regarding input for concerns related to the Proposed Project. The Yomba Shoshone Tribe was consulted on this proposed undertaking at their Tribal Council meeting on June 14, 2019, with no immediate concerns raised but requested a site visit. A copy of the cultural resources report was provided to the Yomba Shoshone Tribe on July 29, 2019.

The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe requested a site visit to the Project Area. A copy of the cultural resources report was provided to the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe on July 30, 2019.

The District Ranger and District Archaeologist set up a site visit to the Project Area for July 30, 2019. The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe participated on the site visit and requested to have a Tribal Monitor during operations of the water well access rout and sites. District Ranger supported the Tribal Monitoring request and notified SGC of this requirement being offered to the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe.

District Ranger discussed the Tribal Monitoring Request from the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe with the Yomba Shoshone Tribal Chair. The Yomba Shoshone Tribal Chair also requested the opportunity for having a Tribal Monito present during disturbance activies. District Ranger also supported the Tribal Monitoring request from Yomba Shoshone Tribe.

### **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

My decision is consistent with the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986). The project conforms to forest plan standard and guidelines for recreation, cultural resources, soil and water, wildlife and fisheries.

My decision complies with the:

- The Mining Act of May 10, 1872, as amended, 30 U.S.C. 21-54 (1994): confers a statutory right to enter upon the public lands to search for minerals
- 37 CFR 228 Subpart A-Locatable Minerals
- FSM 2600 Wildlife, Fisheries, and Sensitive Plant habitat Management; FSH 2609.13 Wildlife and Fisheries program management handbook
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR Part 800-Protection of Historic Properties
- Endangered Species Act
- National Clean Water Act as amended
- Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management
- Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice
- Humboldt-Toiyabe FSM Supplement to Chapter 2080 – Noxious Weeds Management
- FSM 7711 Transportation Analysis

### **DISCLAIMER**

Approval of this Plan does not constitute recognition or certification of ownership by any person named as owner therein. Approval of this Plan does not constitute, now or in the future, recognition or certification of the validity of any mining claim to which it may relate or to the mineral character of the land on which it lies.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES**

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law No. 113-79, Section 8006) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (Public Law No. 113-76, Section 431).



### **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

The proposed actions described in this decision may be implemented after:

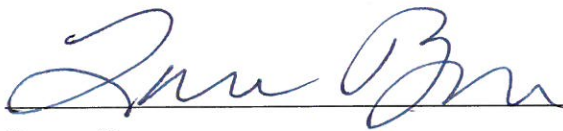
- The Forest Service has accepted the reclamation bond posted by Star Gold Corp,
- Star Gold Corp has signed acceptance of, and the District Ranger has approved and signed the final Plan of Operations,
- Star Gold Corp has received an approval letter from the District Ranger authorizing work to proceed, and
- Star Gold Corp has secured any other applicable state, local and federal permits and authorizations.

### **RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

The responsible official for this project is Lance Brown, Austin-Tonopah District Ranger, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, P.O. Box 130, Austin, Nevada, 89310.

### **PROJECT CONTACT**

For further information regarding this project, please contact Forest Service Geologist Gregory Van Oosbree at 775-778-6129 or [gregory.vanoosbree@usda.gov](mailto:gregory.vanoosbree@usda.gov)



**Lance Brown**  
**District Ranger**

**DATE**

11/4/2019

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